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Death Comes for the Archbishop
a Novel of Love & Death

BY SISTER PETER DAMIAN CHARLES, O.P.

WILLA CATHER'S masterful novel, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, contains a strikingly paradoxical relationship between the title, with its emphasis on death, and the story, with its stress on life and love. This subtle dichotomy of the human condition—love and death, Eros and Thanatos—affords, then, a basis upon which to examine the work.

Nearing the end of his life, the narrative's hero, Archbishop Latour, says to his young friend, Bernard Ducrot, "I shall not die of a cold, my son, I shall die of having lived."¹ One might well read there, 'of having loved,' for that is precisely what this novel portrays. Miss Cather herself gives the clue when she discusses the style of the novel in a letter written to *Commonweal* in November 1927:

I had all my life wanted to do something in the style of legend which is absolutely the reverse of dramatic treatment. Since I first saw the Puvis de Chavannes frescoes of the life of St. Geneviève in my student days, I have wished that I could try something like that in prose; something without accent, with none of the artificial elements of composition. In the Golden Legend the martyrdoms of the saints are no more dwelt upon than are the trivial incidents of their lives; it is as though all human experiences, measured against one supreme spiritual experience, were of about the same importance.²

The "one supreme spiritual experience" of Jean Latour's death is constantly and consciously present to his very living out of the life of love and of dedication he has espoused from the novel's opening

1. Willa Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), p. 269. All references are to this edition.

2. *Willa Cather On Writing* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), p. 9.

pages, and indeed before. Lee Wilson Dodd wrote perceptively in his review of the work: "There is a great, a very great love story in Miss Cather's masterly, quiet narrative. It is a severe, purely designed chalice of hand-beaten silver, filled to the brim with the white essential wine of love—love of man to man, love of God to man, love of man to God."³ Yet this love is inspired and shadowed by death—the death of the God-Man—whose incarnation, Denis de Rougemont tells us, delivered man from "the woe of being alive" and made possible a new concept:

Death, from being the last term, is become the first condition. What the Gospel calls dying to self is the beginning of new life already here below—not the soul's flight out of the world, but its return in force into the midst of the world. . . . Thereupon love is no longer to flee and persistently to reject the act of love . . . the love of God has opened an entirely new way to us—the way of holiness. And the way is the contrary of the sublimation that had been an illusory flight out of the concreteness of life. To love according to this new way is a positive act and an act of transformation.⁴

This is the love, undoubtedly, that motivates and sustains Jean Latour in his positive commitment to life and the goods that it holds—friendship, appreciation of beauty, enjoyment of fine foods and gardens. But the simple fact of his dedication to a transcendent solution to the love-death conflict does not remove the essential struggle from the life of Jean Latour; it does, however, provide a rationale that serves to ease the torment. A sensitive, genteel, intelligent young man, the bishop experiences to an extraordinary degree the demands of the human condition; yet the serenity with which he lives out his life bespeaks the sublimity of his consecration.

Miss Cather's method in this novel is eminently designed to convey this mood of calm acceptance of all the divergencies of human existence. The telling of Jean Marie Latour's journey toward death by recounting a series of adventures interspersed with legends and historic tales is not at all an eclectic, haphazard evasion of the novelist's task. It is, by contrast, a most suitable way of re-creating the

3. Lee Wilson Dodd, "A Hymn to Spiritual Beauty," *Saturday Review of Literature*, IV (September 10, 1927), p. 101.

4. Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World*, trans. Montgomery Belgion, revised and augmented edition, (New York: Anchor Books, 1957), pp. 58-60.

bishop's mind—the landscape to be explored in this probing of the love-death dichotomy. Only by an attempt at assimilation of all that impinges upon the consciousness of this “well-bred and distinguished” pioneer churchman can one approximate any comprehension of the forces that move him. Indeed, it is this quality of intense cerebration, this habit of “[sitting] in the middle of his own consciousness,” of constantly relating his actual situation to all of history, all of civilization, that sets the bishop apart from his fellows. He is assuredly *la tour*, the tower, aloof and above, yet integrally belonging to all around him. At the same time it is this very characteristic that creates within Jean Latour the great tensions of love and death which fill his life and make for the largeness of vision and understanding that marks his person.

The reader's attention is first called to Jean Latour's intellect during the “prologue” when Bishop Ferrand, the American missionary, pleads with the three cardinals to recommend his candidate to the Provincial Council at Baltimore. The Spanish Cardinal Garcia Maria de Allande remarks, suggesting the book's direction, “‘And this Latour is intelligent, you say? What a fate you are drawing upon him!’” (p. 11) The hardship of this fate receives verification when one first views the young bishop in the novel: travelling through the wilderness of conical hills and juniper trees in New Mexico, the “solitary horseman” who is “sensitive to the shape of things” mutters dazedly, “‘*Mais, c'est fantastique!*’” (p. 18) His frustration, however, finds some comfort in an act of love. Opening his weary eyes, he sees before him a juniper tree whose “naked, twisted trunk” had taken the form of a cross. This is, without a doubt, a miracle of the type the bishop was later to explain to his friend and vicar, Joseph Vaillant—“human vision corrected by divine love” (p. 50). He kneels before the symbol of greater Death and Love to renew his love in time of lesser “death.” This worshipper of “singular elegance” and “distinguished” manners is indeed a man of love, of God and of all creation, but his very presence and stance betray him as a man who knows death too—death and suffering. Later in the day when his suffering from thirst becomes extreme, we learn of his solace through meditation on Christ's Passion. The death of the Lord is the great holocaust into which he subsumes all the lesser deaths of his humanity, and through which he transforms his most ordinary actions into deeds of love. And yet, for Bishop Latour, it is his power of intellect that allows this mastery over—or, paradoxically, this submission to—the

combined forces of Love and Death in the person of Jesus Christ. At the same time, however, despite the fact that Jean Latour is ruled by, and rules with, Love—accounting for the overall imperturbable tenor of his life—his intense intellectuality serves as a kind of Thanatos-force that comes into his life and causes the deaths that ready him to meet that final death at the end of his life of love. It is this complex aspect of the bishop's character that I shall examine in this analysis.

The most pervasive of Jean Latour's struggles extends throughout the novel: the constant contrast of his thoughtful nature with that of his active fellow-seminarian and life-long friend, Joseph Vaillant. This difference between the two men, though a basis for their mutual love and support, eventually causes the young bishop's "bitter personal disappointment" at Father Joseph's final departure from him. Although they both come from the same section of France, the priests did not know each other as children. It is in the seminary that the son of the scholarly Latours meets the son of the baker of Riom, and their meeting has immediate consequences. Father Latour later recalls how in an instantaneous act he had chosen the lively, ugly boy for his friend. The narration emphasizes the contrast between the two: "Latour himself was much cooler and more critical in temper; hard to please and often a little grey in mood" (p. 225). Joseph Vaillant—impetuous, gregarious, sickly yet ardent—becomes devoted to the handsome, intellectual, aloof Jean Latour. In their seminary at Clermont both young men, hearing a missionary bishop from Ohio plead for volunteers to the United States, respond eagerly and bind themselves to his aid. On the day of their secret departure from Riom, the tranquil Jean strengthens the tortured Joseph who "had been abroad in the fields all night, wandering up and down, finding his purpose and losing it" (p. 285). Jean Latour, who, "having made his decision and pledged himself, knew no wavering" (p. 284), calms his distraught friend with rational argument and the two begin their journey. Joseph's gratitude to his friend is profound, and, we are told, "he always said that if Jean Latour had not supported him in that hour of torment, he would have been a parish priest in the Puy-de-Dôme for the rest of his life" (p. 286). Jean's intellectuality had saved Vaillant, but frequently in their missionary life together Father Joseph finds that very trait in Jean difficult to understand. By the same token, Father Latour sometimes takes Father Joseph's view to be simplistic if not rash.

Their attitudes differ characteristically in the matter of miracles. Saved from death due to thirst by suddenly coming upon the Mexican settlement of Agua Secreta in an early scene in the novel, Jean Latour reflects:

'If Father Vaillant were here, he would say, "A miracle"; that the Holy Mother, to whom he had addressed himself before the cruciform tree, had led him thither. And it was a miracle. . . . But his dear Joseph must always have the miracle very direct and spectacular, not with Nature, but against it.' (p. 29)

Later after they have jointly heard the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe from the old Mexican priest, Padre Escolastico Herrera, Father Joseph remarks to Bishop Latour: "'Doctrine is well enough for the wise, Jean; but the miracle is something we can hold in our hands and love.'" The bishop's answer sounds the depths of his recognition of both human and divine essences:

'Where there is great love there are always miracles. . . . One might almost say that an apparition is human vision corrected by divine love. I do not see you as you really are Joseph; I see you through my affection for you. The miracles of the Church seem to me to rest not so much upon faces or voices or healing power coming suddenly near to us from afar off, but upon our perceptions being made finer, so that for a moment our eyes can see and our ears can hear what is there about us always.' (p. 49)

This same breadth of vision makes for humor in their lives also, causing Father Latour to see in Father Joseph's excellent soup at Christmas dinner "the result of a constantly refined tradition . . . nearly a thousand years of history" (p. 39), much to the chagrin of the cook! And again, wakening to the tones of the ancient silver bell which Father Vaillant had polished and raised with much effort, Jean comments on its rich and long history to the impatience of his vicar, who complains, "'What are you doing, Jean? Trying to make my bell out an infidel? . . . I noticed that scholars always manage to dig out something belittling'" (p. 45). Father Latour's insistence that he does not belittle but enhance falls upon deaf ears, and the bishop can but smile at the simplicity and zeal of this friend.

It is, however, after they have been missionaries together for a

number of years that Bishop Latour suffers his most difficult struggle both because of his love for and his difference from his old friend. In the spring of 1859, Jean Latour experiences once again the joy of being in Santa Fe with his vicar, who is recovering from malarial fever. The eager Joseph, though delighting in the hours of reflection and prayer allotted to him during May, this favorite of months, tells his bishop he hopes to be on his Arizona mission by July. Bishop Latour's remonstrance, " 'You must realize that I have need of you here, Father Joseph. My duties are too many for one man'," calls forth the ardent plea:

'But you do not need me so much as they do! . . . Any one of our good French priests from Montferrand can serve you here. It is work that can be done by intelligence. But down there it is work for the heart, for a particular sympathy, and none of our new priests understand those poor natures as I do. I have almost become a Mexican! . . . Their foolish ways no longer offend me, their very faults are dear to me. I am *their man*!' (p. 208)

The bishop's response is serene, yet the narrator reveals the death this costs him:

No one would have guessed that a sharp struggle was going on within him. Father Joseph's impassioned request had spoiled a cherished plan, and brought Father Latour a bitter personal disappointment. There was but one thing to do,—and before he reached the tamerisks he had done it. He broke off a spray of the dry lilac-coloured flowers to punctuate and seal, as it were, his renunciation. (pp. 208-09)

The ultimate reward of his sacrifice is foreshadowed immediately afterwards by the appearance of Magdalena, one of the first of his "saved" children, advancing into the garden "in a whirlwind of gleaming wings" (p. 209).

Such symbolic approbations of his successes are rare, however, and Bishop Latour discovers more often, especially in the absence of his Eros-inspired friend, that the "grey mood" of this Thanatos-self returns to haunt his loneliness. The narrator tells of one particularly bitter moment on a bleak "December Night": "Bishop Latour had been going through one of those periods of coldness and doubt which,

from his boyhood, had occasionally settled down upon his spirit and made him feel an alien, wherever he was" (p. 211). In this dark frame of mind, he is obsessed with a sense of failure; he sees his prayers as "empty words"; his soul, a "barren field"; his diocese, a "heathen country." The Indians, whose basic spirit is akin to his own, become, in this dark night, a people who travel "their old road of fear and darkness, battling with evil omens and ancient shadows" (p. 211). The Mexicans, on the other hand, whose carefree nature Father Vaillant regards with such affection, Father Latour views as "children who play with their religion" (p. 211). Racked by the torment of his own powerlessness, the bishop tosses sleepless upon his bed, and finally decides to brave the cold to seek solace in his church. His encounter there with the miserable old peon slave Sada performs in a natural way the "miracle" of grace that he needs to lift his spirit from the throes of Thanatos up to that union of the two forces in Agape, the love of God. He later tells Father Vaillant of the joy of that night which reawakened in him the convictions of youth: the trust in the "Cross that took away indignity from suffering and made pain and poverty a means of fellowship with Christ" (p. 217), and in Our Lady, "the Image, the physical form of Love!" (p. 219). Above all, this experience helps him to comprehend that, pitiful as the trembling Sada was, "his poverty was as bleak as hers. . . . This church was Sada's house and he was a servant in it" (p. 218). The strange paradox of Love and Death is only intelligible in terms of the God-Man's command to love even if it means daily "death."

But such momentary enlightenments do not permit the bishop to quell this growing need to share the joys and hardships of his mission life with his vicar. The following spring, Jean Latour journeys south to visit his Navajo friend Eusabio, whose son had died during the long winter. There, in the midst of a storm, "cut off from even this remote little Indian camp by moving walls and tapestries of sand" (p. 233), he undergoes the mental agony of personal decision: can he justify the recall of Father Vaillant from Tucson to satisfy his own lonely spirit? Pondering this question, he contemplates the strange contradictions of his friend's nature and concludes that "he simply accepted them, and when Joseph had been away for a long while, realized that he loved them all. . . . The man was much greater than the sum of his qualities. He added a glow to whatever kind of human society he was dropped down into" (pp. 226, 228). "On the third day," the narrator records, "the Bishop wrote a somewhat formal

letter to his Vicar." (p. 230). This action, however, does not put to rest the bishop's problems. When Father Joseph obediently returns to Santa Fe, three weeks pass before the bishop makes any move to acquaint the priest with a reason for the recall. Riding out of town one afternoon, Jean Latour leads his friend to a ridge high over the Rio Grande valley where they come upon a "rugged wall" of "strong golden ochre, very much like gold of the sunlight that was now beating upon it. . . . "That hill, *Blanchet*," he tells his boyhood friend, 'is my Cathedral' " (p. 241). The revelation of this sacred hope is accompanied by the first mention of the bishop's actual death: " 'I should like to complete it before I die—if God so wills' " (p. 242). As the bishop discloses his inmost thoughts, and, at the same time, reveals openly his deeply death-conscious nature, his expansive vision comprehends the past and the future as well as the present; but his beloved vicar responds disappointingly: " 'You plan far ahead. . . . Well, that is what a bishop should be able to do. I see only what is under my nose. But I had no idea you were going in for fine buildings when everything about us is so poor—and we ourselves are so poor' " (pp. 243-44). Once again, the bishop explains calmly to his friend, " 'But the Cathedral is not for us, Father Joseph. We build for the future—better not lay a stone unless we can do that' " (p. 244). Just before they leave the rock, now a throbbing gold in the subdued rays of the setting sun, Latour confides in his friend, " 'I tell you *Blanchet*, I would rather have found that hill of yellow rock than have come into a fortune to spend in charity. The Cathedral is very near my heart, for many reasons. I hope you do not consider me very worldly' " (p. 245). Indeed, his last sentence betrays the clarity with which he senses his friend's mystification at having been called home from saving souls to hear a poor missionary bishop talk of dreams. Joseph's lack of understanding of symbolic values, though it hurts Father Latour, prepares him somewhat for the "letter of importance" which comes soon afterwards from the Bishop of Leavenworth. Reading the plea for a priest for the newly populated area of Pike's Peak, he offers the task to Father Joseph. The old impetuosity appears in Vaillant's reply, " 'I can start tomorrow if you wish it,' " and Jean brakes his friend's enthusiasm with the reminder, " 'Not so fast. . . . You must take your living with you. . . . This, I fear, will be the hardest mission you have undertaken' " (p. 248).

As the preparations get underway, the narrator discloses Father

Latour's pain at the thought of separation, possibly a "final break" from his friend. It is only when the old subject of miracles comes up again that Father Joseph begins to see the deep feeling at the root of his intellectual friend's maneuvers. Commenting happily on the fortunate chance of his being in Santa Fe, however obscure the reason, when the "letter of importance" arrives, he concludes, "'When the call came, I was here to answer it—by a miracle, indeed.'" Once more Jean objects rationally:

'Miracles are all very well, Joseph, but I see none here. I sent for you because I felt the need of your companionship. I used my authority as a Bishop to gratify my personal wish. That was selfish, if you will, but surely natural enough. We are countrymen, and are bound by early memories. And that two friends, having come together, should part and go their separate ways—that is natural too. No, I don't think we need any miracle to explain all this.' (p. 253)

Sobered by his bishop's words, Joseph retires to his room where he reflects—perhaps for the first time—on the great difference in their natures. He realizes that "wherever he went, he soon made friends that took the place of country and family. But Jean, who was at ease in any society and was always the flower of courtesy, could not form any new ties. . . . He was . . . gracious to everyone, but known to very few" (p. 253). Conscious now of the severe struggle within his friend's soul, he is touched to tears when the bishop offers him the white mule Angelica to accompany his Contento—the pair he had bargained for so shamelessly at the outset of their missionary life together, the pair symbolic of their own close relationship in joy and hardship. The next day, Jean Latour rides with Joseph as far as the loop where the road gives the traveler the last glimpse of Santa Fe; Joseph murmurs his motto, "*Auspice Maria!*" and turns his back on "familiar things." Returning to his home and his study, the bishop seems, the narrator assures us, "to come back to reality, to the sense of a Presence awaiting him" (p. 256). Once again, as in the "deaths" that filled his earliest days as a missionary, Father Latour seeks refuge in the immensity of the Love and Death of his Saviour. He finds his "sense of loss . . . replaced by a sense of restoration" and reflects on the solitude which is not a negation but a "perpetual flowering." The bishop's intellectual powers, so often the source of darkness and death to him, now bring life and love in his contempla-

tion of Mary, the fascination of men of all times—even in “the long twilight between the Fall and the Redemption, when the pagan sculptors were always trying to achieve the image of a goddess who should yet be a woman” (p. 257).

In the years of separation that follow, the love of the two great men does not diminish, but the death caused by the contrast of their natures becomes subsumed. On the occasion of their last visit together, Jean Latour, the great thinker, can bestow upon his friend the considered recognition: “*Blanchet . . . you are a better man than I. You have been a great harvester of souls, without pride and without shame—and I am always a little cold—un pédant, as you used to say. If hereafter we have stars in our crowns, yours will be a constellation. Give me your blessing*” (pp. 261-62). And the man whose “grey mood” so often brought Thanatos into his life kneels before his vicar, “*Trompe-la-Mort*”—whose Eros-character drove him always deeper and deeper into life. Indeed, Father Vaillant’s nickname, “Death-Deceiver,” given to him because of his frequent escapes from death though mortally ill, works well to suggest his Eros-nature, so alien to the Thanatos-spirit of his friend, Jean Latour.

Although Jean Latour’s relationship with Joseph Vaillant is the most pervasive example in the novel of the love-death conflict created by his keen intellect, it is not the only one. Throughout his missionary activities this introspective quality marks his dealings with the varied groups under his jurisdiction, often providing a deeper love and understanding but making also for dark hours of struggle with his Thanatos-spirit. This is clearly seen as the narrator pictures Father Latour’s first contact with his flock in the old Mexican settlement of Agua Secreta which he comes upon so fortunately when he is in danger of dying from thirst. (Miss Cather also subtly symbolizes here the reciprocal needs of pastor and flock.) Accepting the meager hospitality of these people, Latour recognizes the death-dealing possibilities of their superstitious cult of the saints and of their narrow-minded religiosity which sees infidels in all Protestants; yet in his wisdom he discerns too the simplicity of their faith and love. He can smile at their “mixed theology” just as he smiles at his own musing on the goat, “symbol of pagan lewdness . . . [whose] fleece had warmed many a good Christian, and [whose] rich milk nourished sickly children” (p. 31). His consideration of the broad view of history enables him to see how death, like the darkness which must

finally release the "subterranean stream," ultimately yields to love even as it springs from love:

This spot had been a refuge for humanity long before these Mexicans had come upon it. It was older than history. . . . This settlement was his Bishopric in miniature. . . . The Faith planted by the Spanish Friars was not dead; it waited only the toil of the husbandman. (p. 32)

These reflections, which can only derive from a consciousness "acquainted with the night," result finally in a "love for his fellow man flowing like peace about his heart" (p. 29), as well as in a calm assurance at the thought of future confrontations with such terrifying persons at the powerful old Padre Martinez of Taos.

In his associations with his native clergy Father Latour employs this same judicious blend of mind and heart, always carefully assessing a situation intellectually while yet allowing his final judgment to be made with charity. It is, however, in his dealings with the most primitive culture under his care—the Indians—that Bishop Latour's sensitive and learned nature faces its darkest times. The first Indian with whom the bishop comes in close contact is his guide, Jacinto. This young man shares the bishop's hardships in travel, and gradually, though silence is "their usual form of intercourse," he comes to enjoy real companionship with Father Latour. On their trip to the Laguna Indians as they discuss the meaning of the evening star and pray together before retiring, the narrator notes the bishop's "satisfaction that he was beginning to have some sort of human companionship with this Indian boy" (p. 93). Jacinto's reactions, too are revealed, and one sees the deep source of Jean Latour's appeal for such sincere natures:

The truth was, Jacinto liked the Bishop's way of meeting people. . . . In his experience, white people, when they addressed Indians, always put on a false face. . . . The Bishop put on none at all. He stood straight and turned to the Governor of Laguna, and his face underwent no change. Jacinto thought this remarkable. (p. 94)

This simple acceptance of people as they are wins for Jean Latour love and friendship, but it sometimes causes him frustration and suffering. Journeying with Jacinto toward Acoma Mesa in order to

say Mass there for the dwindling tribe, Father Latour learns that these Indians, who "must share the universal human yearning for something permanent, enduring, without shadow of change" had their idea in substance: "They actually lived upon their Rock; were born upon it and died upon it" (p. 98). Such concretization of an aspiration appalls Latour, and he finds the celebration of Mass in the "gaunt, grey, grim" church of Acoma to be an unparalleled experience. Here his vast knowledge of the past depresses him as he realizes the ruthless power that made this church possible, and the grim grasp for safety that made this sanctuary necessary. Consequently he feels not as though he were on the roof of the world, but as if he were "celebrating Mass at the bottom of the sea, for antediluvian creatures; for types of life so old, so hardened, so shut within their shells, that the sacrifice of Calvary could hardly reach back so far" (p. 100). Neither is his sense of "inadequacy and spiritual defeat" lessened when, on the homeward trip, Jacinto narrates the fearful "Legend of Fray Baltazar," the story of the ambitious friar whose exploitation of the Acoma tribe is matched by their requital of his cruelty in slinging him to his death over the edge of the rock. This same haunting feeling of frustration in the face of darkness re-occurs to Jean Latour months later as he spends a night with Jacinto's family in their tribal home, the Pecos pueblo. And his unusual experience of camping with Jacinto inside the peculiarly shaped cave, "Stone Lips," merely strengthens his intimation of a dark secret at the heart of this tribe's trouble. Though the bishop keeps the secret of the mysterious "horror" in the cave, he is the more deeply convinced that "neither the white men nor the Mexicans in Santa Fe understand anything about Indian beliefs or the workings of the Indian mind" (p. 133).

The Indian character does, however, strike a responsive chord in Father Latour. One Indian who remains his life-long friend is Eusabio, the Navajo leader whom the young bishop met soon after he first came to his new diocese. The strong brave's dignified appearance reflects the broad view of culture so appealing to Father Latour's mind. Later, the bishop visits Eusabio in order to console him upon the death of his only son, and the welcome he receives is one of dignity, confidence, and appreciation. It is here, enjoying the peace of the isolated Navajo hogan, that Father Latour struggles with himself over the matter of Father Vaillant's recall and feels

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himself "sitting in the heart of a world made of dusty earth and moving air" (p. 230). Returning to Santa Fe in the company of Eusabio, Jean Latour finds that "traveling with Eusabio was like traveling with the landscape made human" (p. 232). Inspired by this intense rapport with natural life, the bishop muses upon the race's characteristic attitude toward the land: "'It was the Indian manner to vanish into the landscape, not to stand out against it. . . . They seemed to have none of the European's desire to 'master' nature, to arrange and re-create. They spent their ingenuity in the other direction; in accommodating themselves to the scene in which they found themselves.'" (pp. 233-34)

This respect and reverence for nature's mystery taps a kindred depth in Jean Latour's profound being, and he detects in the Navajo people a "superior strength" which adds to his sorrow during the years when this noble tribe is persecuted in and expelled from their own land. Though he is unable to aid them, Father Latour rejoices in their final restoration to their "sacred places" and this thought brings him consolation as he welcomes Eusabio in Santa Fe just before his death. The devotion of the stalwart primitive to the scholarly old priest confirms the deep spiritual bonds which unite them despite the cultural distance between them. The Indian nature seems capable of calling forth not only the dark Thanatos but also the strong Eros within the bishop's soul.

The last part of the novel, Book Nine: "Death Comes for the Archbishop," brings into relief the "one supreme spiritual experience of Father Latour's life—his death—the end toward which his full and varied activities have been tending and the goal toward which he looks for the fulfillment of the struggle between Eros and Thanatos in Agape. The section opens with a quotation from a letter written in 1888—nearly forty years after the bishop's arrival in New Mexico—by Jean Marie Latour to Joseph Vaillant's sister, the beloved Philomène. While declaring his love for his old friend, the letter at the same time betrays the Thanatos-tendency which has always marked the bishop's deeply intellectual faculties, for he assures Philomène that death has been the source not of separation but of union between the two friends. This thought, welling from the Thanatos-spirit which is constantly aware of death, produces the same depth and breadth of vision overflowing in love that has characterized the bishop's whole career. He is concerned not only with the present

moment, his approach to death, but with the past and with the future. His interest in the future declares itself in his care for the training of new missionaries for the diocese. But his joy in the past occupies even more of his hours as the time grows short. After suffering chill and cold from exposure during a mission journey, Latour requests a return to the scene of his youthful activity—Santa Fe. Now near his beloved Cathedral, the bishop realizes that the withdrawal into its shadow is an acknowledgement of an approach to his tomb. He specifically asks Bernard Ducrot to make the journey with him “late in the afternoon, toward sunset” (p. 270), when the glowing mountains embracing the town and his Cathedral burn an “intense rose-carnelian; not the colour of living blood, . . . but the colour of the dried blood of saints and martyrs” (p. 273); the *Sangre de Cristo*, indeed. His old study, too, with its “thick, wavy white walls that muted sound, that shut out the world and gave repose to the spirit” (p. 273) makes a kind of tomb to which he retires before his last long rest. Here in this retreat he follows a simple routine of rising, praying, visiting, and thinking, his ever-active intellect always at work. At times he dictates “old legends and customs and superstitions” (p. 277); at others he recreates in his imagination memories of his missionary life with Joseph Vaillant, and contemplates with serenity the differences between himself and his friend.

As the final days close in upon him, his “sound mind” surveys life with equilibrium. Death, who has always been with him, he knows well, and he feels confident that “the future [will] take care of itself.” The narrator continues:

But he had an intellectual curiosity about dying, about the changes that took place in a man's beliefs and values. More and more life seemed to him an experience of the Ego, in no sense the Ego itself. This conviction . . . was something apart from his religious life; it was an enlightenment that came to him as a man, a human creature. . . . He observed also that there was no longer any perspective in his memories. . . . He was soon to have done with calendared time, and it had already ceased to count for him. He sat in the middle of his own consciousness; none of his former states of mind were lost or outgrown. They were all within reach of his hand, and all comprehensible. (pp. 289-90)

This quality of close intellection which had dominated his every

action and allowed for the depth and breadth of view encompassing both love and death persists to the last. Because he had centered his thought upon the Love and Death of Christ whose Cross, planted in the middle of history, extends its arms both to the past and to the future, he himself was able to imitate that all-embracing vision and to find no contradiction in the fact that his future begins where his past had begun; "in a tip-tilted green field among his native mountains where . . . he was trying to give consolation to a young man who was being torn in two before his eyes by the desire to go and the desire to stay. He was trying to forge a new Will in that devout and exhausted priest; and the time was short, for the diligence for Paris was already rumbling down the mountain gorge." (p. 299)

Death, from being the "last term" has indeed become the "first condition" and the new life of love in the future is not totally alien to the person who has lived it out on these terms already here below. Jean Marie Latour can face death with genuine peace of mind and soul because his personal love-death struggle, though unresolved for most of his life, has gained in strength and serenity through constant reference to the supreme example, that consummation of the Love-Death conflict in the person of Jesus Christ.

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